



# A SURVEY OF THE SARAIS, THE REST HOUSE, CONSTRUCTED BY MUGHAL EMPERORS ON THE MUGHAL ROAD

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## ABSTRACT

Mughal Emperor used to visit The Valley of Kashmir after defeating the Chack Rulers and included Kashmir as their Subah in 1585. They choose the route from Lahore via Nowshera, Chingus, Rajouri and Rattan Pir Pass to Srinagar, Kashmir. It was necessary to discover the appropriate halting places with rest houses or Sarais on the route to stay during their visit. A large number of Sarais were constructed in various places on the route with variation in architectural taste according to the topography. In this paper an attempt is made to study the locations, architectural styles and layout of these monuments. Almost all the Sarais, existing or partly ruined, are taken for study. It is found that these structures constructed with the local stones and the bricks were also used in construction. These monuments are planned on simple designs but massive production speaks of their strength as their existence till now.

## INTRODUCTION

The construction of sarais or rest houses was not a novel creation of the Kings or Emperors of medieval period. It was a necessity for the highly centralized governments to keep their control and communication contact with remote regions of their vast empires. The governments had to erect and maintain structures in the form of rest-houses or sarais for their own interest as well as the interest of their subject. The earliest references to the construction of rest houses or sarais come from the period of Chandragupta Maurya (Heval 1972.207). The seventh pillar Edict of Ashoka also mentioned (Thaper 1973.256). The sarais built by Sher Shah and Akbar on the various routes at the interval of two and five kros respectively (Khan.111). The construction of sarais by Sher Shah and Akbar were to a great extent similar in the nature of construction. Thus the tradition survived from the earliest period down to the sixteenth century and onwards.

The sarais were erected by Mughals at intervals on the way from Agra to Srinagar, Kashmir. These were situated at Bhimber, Noushara, Chingus, Rajouri, Thana, Bherangala, Sadabad and Chinar Sarai the last one on the road from Bhimber to Kashmir. The successors of the Mughal in Kashmir, the Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras had not constructed new sarai but they maintained the old existing structures by renovating them and maintaining them in working condition.

The sarais had almost a uniform plan. They were generally single storied buildings enclosed by a strong wall from all sides. Two gateways in entire enclosed wall laid in the opposite direction were normally large enough to provide entrance or exit of heavily loaded camels elephants or carts. One of the gates had been used for the residence of a supervisor. The small dwelling rooms or kothries were constructed on the raised platforms. Each room was provided with a small window for light and ventilation and had a small verandah which opened on a chabutrah about (1.22m) above the ground level. The chabutrah was provided with shady trees in rows. For the convenience of animals and burdens of soldiers and travellers a big platform was made. The wells or baolis were the important part of the sarais for the water requirements of dwellers (travellers) and animals.

### Chingus Sarai

Chingus is about 23 km from Noushara. The sarai is situated on the flat tableland on the right bank of river Mini Tawi. It lies between Nowshera and Raiouri (Barnier.1934.401). A bungalow meant for travellers' accommodation is some 300 metres away from the village Chingus. The sarai is situated near the bungalow. There is the forest of pine trees towards west of the sarai while there a grazing ground towards the river.

The Chingus is famous for the grave of entombing entrails of Jahangir (Sufi. 263) who died on his way to Lahore on 28th October 1627 while returning from Kashmir (Anayt 12). The sarai existing on the road from Raiouri to Noushara is a well planned residential structure. The walls of serai enclose the dwelling quarters as well as a large open courtyard. The tomb of mortal remains of Jahangir and the residential complex both have their own gateways but they are interconnected with each other. The dwelling quarters are well built and enclosed by a wall meant for protection. Besides, a number of cells have been made along the walls which have their openings inside the enclosure. In the centre of the dwelling quarters lies a small mosque. The mosque is simple and has three arched gate and a dome like structure.

### Sarai at Nadpur

Nadpur is a small village in between Rajouri and Naushehra, which is 38km from Rajouri town and 10 km from Naushehra. The sarai (IA-A Review 1977- 78.29) is

situated on the western side of the road. The sarai-cum-fort is of typical Mughal style having two main gates opposite to each other one is in the northern wall while the other one in the southern wall of the square building. There are also traces of a well in the centre of the sarai. The gates are about 12 feet in high and eight feet in wide. On the western side of it is dense mountain forest of pine trees and on the other side a river Mini Tawi flows. The height of walls is 8 feet at some places because of being damaged but wherever it is intact and attains a height of 10 feet. Building material used in construction are the local stones that mud mortar has been used as cementing material. This type of mortar is a general feature of construction which may be witnessed in almost all the sarais on the way leading to Kashmir through Pir Panjal mountain range.

### Sarai at Nowshera

Nowshera is situated on the bank of the river Tawi and is 48 kms from Rajouri. The sarai and other buildings were originally built during the time of Emperor Akbar (IA-A Review 1989-90.34). This monument is unique in its construction and is worthy of attention. It is spacious and different from other sarais in their general layout and composition. The sarai has got double enclosure walls. The outer wall has double storied bastions at the corners. Each bastion is crowned by strong and massive battlements. The sarai also has rows of alcoves. The entrance of the sarai is in the middle of the west wall. It consists of arched cells facing a common courtyard, a feature to other sarais of the region. A mosque is standing on the opposite side of the main entrance of the sarai also built by the Mughals. The mosque has all the architectural characters of the period and is still being used by the Muslims of locality.

There is another sarai in Nowshera some three to four kms apart from the above mentioned sarai. It is not in good condition, has a single enclosure wall and two entrance points in the middle of the opposite walls. There have been the residential areas lying towards the southwest corner of the enclosure wall.

### Sarai at Nariyan

The Naryan Sarai is only a few kms away from the famous sarai at Chingus which lies at a distance of (23 kms from Nowshera). It has the same architectural features as the other sarais of the period on the Imperial Route (Mugahl Road) leading to Kashmir while coming from Lahore. The enclosure wall of the sarai is about three feet in width in which local stone boulders have been used. The building is in dilapidated condition. It has its main gate in the middle of the western wall. On each of the corners there are well built bastions. The whole complex has single storied buildings.

### Sarai of Dharamsala

A few kilometers from Nariyan on the same line there is another sarai belongs to Mughal period. The structure is standing on the right bank of the river Mini Tawi flowing from Rajouri towards south crossing the Nowshera Tehsil on the western table land. Dharmshala is the name of the village. It is said that once it was famous for Hindu worship. Later on during Mughal period a sarai was constructed to serve as a halting place for the Emperor and travellers going to Kashmir. Now it is being used by the local people. It is not of the size of other sarais but small structure having double storied building. The main entrance is in the middle of the western wall. There are four bastions on the four corners of the building. The walls of the residences in the sarai are broken down at many places. A jungle of weed has grown over the top of the wall and roofs of the rooms. Wall construction is same as in other sarais. The building material used is local stone boulders, bricks and at some places mud plaster has been used. It also contains the smadhi of Baba Lal Chand and also a Hindu temple inside the enclosure of the sarai which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It is a centre of worship of the local people.

ple. It is said that the temple was built during the Dogra Rule in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### Sarai of Muradpur

The structural complex of sarai of Muradpur is seven kilometers from Rajouri and forty one kilometers from Nowhera. It has been constructed on the high table land and overlooks the green field around the banks of Mini Tawi River. The structure is not in good state of preservation due to lack of maintenance of monuments. It is an interesting structural complex having a mosque, with all its features. There is a big Assembly Hall which would have been Diwan-i-khas during Mughals. The structure is in dilapidated condition having its roof in the form of debris. The enclosure wall is in good condition. Each corner of the sarai has bulbous bastions but the upper portion is damaged. The thickness of the enclosures wall is not uniform ranging from one to two meters. It is built by rubble stones with lime mortar. The structure includes a number of rooms. It is now under the use of local population.

#### Sarai of Andarkot

Andarkot is in the southern portion of the Rajouri town situated on the top of table land on the confluence of the Tawi river and Kotli nalla. There is no complete structure except the mosque of Mughal period. These structural remains noticed earlier by ASI, tell us that once there stood a fort, palace compartment (cells) Hammams, Assembly hall and gardens. The sarai contained all these structures earlier but in a dilapidated condition. The special feature of the monument was a palace inside used by the Mughal Emperors during their visit to Kashmir. Except few traces the area is now occupied by the local people for their residences and a post office.

#### Sarai at Rajouri

The sarai and other structural complexes are on the left bank of the river Mini Tawi. It is an interesting structure had a picturesque palace. The fortress contained mosque, Assembly Hall Hammam, dwelling compartments and gardens. It was one of the largest monuments on the Imperial Route (Mughal Road) to Kashmir. There are bastions known as Burj on each corner of the sarai. Only the Western Wall exists today. The building material used comprises of rubble stones and bricks with lime mortar. The wall is approximately 2 meter in width. All the surviving structures are now occupied by Old District Hospital and Boys Higher Secondary School. All the components are in ruined except the western wall of a mosque on the western end of Higher Secondary School. The wall contains mehrab in the middle and arches on both the ends. The mosque was not in use for prayers due to most of its parts were damaged since 2016 the local Muslim population of the town renovated and restored for prayers.

#### Sarai of Fatehpur

It is six kilometers from Rajouri town in the Imperial Route. The sarai has a strong enclosure, which still exists. There are two gates in the entire structure existing in the opposite walls of North-south direction. The gate of the southern wall is larger than the northern gate which was perhaps the main entrance of sarai. The western wall is stronger than others and is about two to three feet in thickness. The interior enclosure is about 60 x 45 metres. The structure is rectangular with bastion on each corner. The walls are built of local stones having lime and mortar. In front of the main entrance there is a structure resembling with a pound below. The structure is measured about 15x15 feet. Perhaps it was used for water for animals only.

#### Thanamandi Sarai:

Thanamandi is 21 km from Rajouri Town. It is perhaps last halting place of Mughal before the Rattan Shah Pir mountain range. It is surrounded by mountains from all sides except south speaks of its magnificent view. The interesting structural complex has remarkable construction. There are two enclosure walls built one after the other. These walls mix a new brilliance to the monument. The technique of double wall shows an extra protection introduced by the Mughals. The sarais contains residential rooms, hammam, and garden in the centre of the enclosure. The doors of all the rooms around open towards centre. There are two gateways on opposite walls, one opens towards west and the other main entrance exists towards east. The sarai is in good condition. Now it is occupied by the India Army after the commencement of confusion and chaos in the valley since 1989. Before occupation of the army it was maintained by a private Educational Institution.

#### Hirapur sarai

It is situated on the Imperial route at Hirapur after crossing Pir Panjal range. The sarai contains two gateways in the opposite walls. The rectangular structure is enclosed by four walls. Each wall is about five meters high and two meters wide having small room like structures in a row with arched open towards the open hall. The sarai provided with bastions and battlements.

#### CONCLUSION

The sarais on the Imperial route from Bhimber to Shupiyan are similar with only marginal differences in their architecture and construction. Most of the sarais are square or rectangular in plan and surrounded by single or double enclosures a smaller one is also attached in some of the sarais as it was the feature of the Mughal Rest houses (Sarai) in other parts of the Country. These were the extensions which were made later to increase the accommodation capacity of the exist-

ing sarais. On the riversides the royal residence is a striking feature of these sarais. Mosques are found usually in the bigger part of the sarai enclosure but in some cases it is outside in the opposite of the eastern entrance. The arched rooms with verandah have been built against the interior of fortress with masonry work or backed bricks. The arched gateways are wide and high with masonry roofs. Both sides of the gateways are provided with small decorated chamber for guards to keep their eyes on the incoming and outgoing movements. The larger size of gateways is one of the features noticed till the end of Jahangir's reign (1627 A.D.) later they are found to be much smaller.

With the political affairs the beauty and charming Kashmir has always been the attraction of Emperors, kings or nobles. So the sarais on the Imperial route from Lahore to Kashmir are mostly constructed on the tableland near the bank of rivers to enjoy the natural beauty also.

#### SUGGESTIONS

Most of the sarais are dying with the lapse of time. There are our Heritage monuments we have to save it. The government should preserve these monuments.

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